

FALL 2014 STUDY GROUP DESCRIPTIONS

Monday 9:55-11:25 AM VICHY FRANCE, ITS ORIGINS, HISTORY AND LEGACY **Abbreviated Study Group Name:** Vichy France **Coordinator:** Raoul Oreskovic As of June 10, 1940, the French Third Republic no longer exists. France becomes ruled by an anti-republican regime with a fascist ideology actively collaborating with Nazi Germany. The 1940-44 years are darkened by increasing collaboration and repression, and especially by persecutions, imprisonment, torture and the deportations of Jews, refugees, and Freemasons. France's ideals eventually prevail as a result of its armed resistance, the opposition of many ordinary Frenchmen and the contribution of French forces fighting with the Allies. France is liberated, collaborators are tried and purged, and France in time apologizes to Vichy's victims. In reviewing the history and legacy of Vichy, we examine the origins of French anti-Semitism and the anti-parliamentary and fascist ideology shared by many intellectuals, writers and politicians. **Readings and other materials:** Paxton, Robert O., *Vichy France: Old Guard and New Order 1940-1944* (Columbia University Press, 2001, ISBN 0231124694; \$33). Other readings to be sent by email. Film clips to be viewed in class. **Raoul Oreskovic** is an international energy trader. He has coordinated study groups on the Austro-Hungarian Empire and the

14th Century. Syllabus **Monday 9:55-11:25 AM NEW YORK STORIES**

II Abbreviated Study Group Name: New York Stories II New York City has provided an exquisite backdrop for great writing. We read and discuss works of authors who have experienced living in or visiting New York. These selections run the literary gamut: fiction, essays, memoirs, diaries, letters, autobiographies, and poetry. Famous authors will be included, as well as those less familiar to readers. A sampling: Walt Whitman, Theodore Dreiser, Jacob Riis, Margaret Fuller, F. Scott Fitzgerald, Henry James, Mary McCarthy, Jane Jacobs, Frank O'Hara, Allen Ginsberg and Ralph Ellison. The complete list can be found in the syllabus. This study group is a continuation of "New York: It's A Wonderful Town" given in Fall 2013 and does not repeat material covered in that one. **Readings:** Phillip Lopate, ed., *Writing New York: A Literary Anthology*, (Library of America, 2008, ISBN 1598530216; \$24.95) 1998 and 2000 editions are also acceptable. **Coordinator:** **Barbara Salant** has coordinated six study groups in the fields of literature, art, and drama. The most recent was "New York: It's A Wonderful Town." Syllabus **Monday 9:55-11:25 AM LATIN**

POETRY Abbreviated Study Group Name: Latin Poetry This study group provides a basic understanding of Latin poetry in translation through a close reading of selected works of Catullus, Lucretius, Virgil, Horace, Ovid, Martial and Juvenal. The group examines the presentation and development of a variety of themes, such as honor and reputation, love and sexuality, themes of mortality and nostalgia, the concept of destiny, the relationship between men and women, and the political context at the time. The group also discusses the influence of Greek poetry on Latin poets. **Readings and other Required Materials:** *Two Centuries of Roman Poetry*, edited by Arthur Robin Davis and Eberhard Christopher Kennedy (Bristol Classical Press, 1998, ISBN 1853995274; \$21.95); *Roman Poetry From the Republic to the Silver Age*, translated by Dorothea Wender

(Southern Illinois University Press, 1991, ISBN 0809316943; \$30). **Coordinator:** **Nicholas Alexiou** studied Greek and Latin Literature and History at Columbia University. He spent his working years as a banker and database designer, and has now returned to his first love. Syllabus**Monday 12:10-1:40 PM THE EVOLUTION OF EMOTION (AND POLITICAL LEANINGS) Abbreviated Study Group Name:** Evolution of Emotion **Coordinator:** James Smith What makes us happy or sad? How are lust, fear, or anger aroused? Jaak Panksepp is a leading researcher on the evolutionary underpinnings of the seven basic emotional systems and their underlying brain structure, which is similar in all mammals. Using his book, we explore an evidence-based evolutionary taxonomy of emotions and affects representing a brand-new clinical paradigm for treating psychiatric disorders in clinical practice. We finish by examining how our genetically determined emotions influence our political preferences, looking at the burgeoning volume of research in this area. **Readings:** Jaak Panksepp and Lucy Biven, *The Archeology of Mind* (W.W. Norton, 2012, ISBN 978-0393705315; \$55.00). Selected internet readings. **James Smith** has explored the connections between emotions and learning during his career as an adult education professional. He coordinated Evolutionary Psychology in the fall of 2013. Syllabus **Monday 12:10-1:40 PM CONTEMPORARY AMERICAN WOMEN PLAYWRIGHTS Abbreviated Study Group Name:** Women Playwrights **Coordinator:** Dolores Walker

Why were there so few recognized American women playwrights before the late twentieth century? What explains their tremendous growth in numbers since then? We begin with a brief history of women playwrights and the techniques of leading contemporary teachers/dramatists, including Maria Irene Fornes, Marsha Norman and Paula Vogel. We read and analyze the works of Pulitzer Prize playwrights and Pulitzer finalists: Marsha Norman, Paula Vogel, Sarah Ruhl, Lynn Nottage and Quiara Alegria Hudes. We explore the sources of their craft and inspiration and the cultural and political context of their plays. We examine their choices of theme, style, plot and characterization. Assigned plays are read prior to the session and then read aloud.

Readings and other materials:

Quiara Alegria Hudes, *Water By The Spoonful* (Theatre Communications Group, 2012, ISBN 9781559364386; \$14.95);
Lynn Nottage, *Intimate Apparel/Fabulation* (Theatre Communications Group, 2006, ISBN 9781559362795; \$14.95);
Sarah Ruhl – (To be announced);
Vogel, Paula, *How I Learned to Drive* (Dramatists Play Service, rev. ed., 1997, ISBN 9780822216230; \$8);
Other materials will be distributed.

Before practicing law, **Dolores Walker** spent 25 years in the theatre (AEA, Dramatists Guild). She taught dramatic literature at John Jay. Recently, she coordinated HUAC: Playwrights and Filmmakers.

Syllabus

Monday 12:10-1:40 PM

A GREAT 19th CENTURY FRENCH NOVEL: STENDHAL'S

THE CHARTERHOUSE OF PARMA

Abbreviated Study Group Name: *Charterhouse of Parma*

Coordinator: Renee F. Wehrmann

We begin with an introductory review of the political, sociological and literary scene of France at the start of the 19th Century. Then we proceed to an in depth analytical reading of *The Charterhouse of Parma*, a book where love, intrigue, history, satire, humor and superb style combine to create a magnificent and unforgettable novel. Its author, Stendhal, is considered one of the very great French writers of the 19th Century.

Reading: Stendhal, *The Charterhouse of Parma*, translated by John Sturrock (Penguin Classics, 2007, ISBN 978-0140449662; \$13).

N.B. Since we are going to do much reading in class, and since some translations leave much to be desired, all participants are required to get this edition.

Renee Fainas Wehrmann is a Professor Emerita of French, Pace University. Over the last ten years she has coordinated a variety of IRP study groups in French literature in translation.

Syllabus

Monday 12:10-1:40 PM

THE BEST OF BRITISH FILM

Abbreviated Study Group Name: The Best of British Film

Coordinators: Moya Duffy, Marianne Nelson

Truffaut once remarked that there was a certain incompatibility between the words *British* and *Film*. Stephen Frears's highly appropriate response was "Well, Bollocks to Truffaut." Join us in enjoying 12 great British films, from early Ealing comedies to the voyeuristic shocking film that finished Michael Powell's career. Film is the most collaborative of the arts and we start by exploring the formal language of film: how a great director and cameraman technically manipulate images for meaning and why editing is so important. We consider music, setting, dialogue, acting, screenplay and how the many aspects of film work together to make a great film. We will also discuss any British social, historical, or cultural issues that the films reflect and explore.

Films: Study group begins with Nicholas Roeg's *Don't Look Now*, followed by Carol Reed's *The Third Man*. See Syllabus for rest of list.

Moya has coordinated Japanese and Chinese Film and **Marianne** has coordinated Reel Justice.

Syllabus

Tuesday 9:55-11:25 AM

TELLING OUR STORY: WRITING MEMOIR

Abbreviated Study Group Name: Telling Our Story

Coordinators: Carmen Mason, Leyla Mostovoy

A memoir is made from the most enduring, moving and informative experiences of one's life. It may entertain, instruct, enlighten or caution its readers, and it reveals not only what happened but what its writer makes of what happened. It helps one to get to the bottom of things. Writings can be essays or chapters from a full-length memoir in progress. A participant reads his/her eight-minute

(maximum) piece in class, followed by constructive critiques by the participants. Does it engage the listeners? Confuse in parts? Have a coherent, consistent voice? Might more be explored? The writers are encouraged to ask the listeners about effectiveness, clarity, language, etc.

Readings and other Required Materials: Books and selections will be announced and short pieces distributed.

Carmen Mason has been writing for over sixty years and guiding writing for over forty. She has won poetry and prose prizes. **Leyla Mostovoy** has taught English for twenty years and completed a memoir about growing up in Turkey, Israel and Brazil before settling in New York.

Syllabus

Tuesday 9:55-11:25 AM

EUGENE O'NEILL, MASTER DRAMATIST

Abbreviated Study Group Name: Eugene O'Neill

Coordinator: Harding (Pete) Lemay

Eugene O'Neill singlehandedly brought American drama into dominance on the world stages in the first half of the twentieth century. Breaking away from traditional forms and attitudes, he peopled his plays with compassionate depictions of waterfront whores, neurotic society wives, homesick sailors, New England farmers, flophouse derelicts, and drug addicts. Illuminating the dark recesses of human fears and guilt with force and clarity unmatched before or since, he joined Ibsen, Shaw, Strindberg, and Chekhov as one of the masters of modern drama. We discuss five plays, two from the nineteen twenties and three from his later years. Please read Acts One and Two of *Anna Christie* for the first class.

Readings: Any edition of the following plays: *Anna Christie*, *The Hairy Ape*, *The Iceman Cometh*, *Long Day's Journey Into Night*, and *A Moon for the Misbegotten*

Harding (Pete) Lemay has coordinated over thirty study groups and is the author of two published memoirs, thirteen produced plays, and thousands of soap opera scripts.

Syllabus

Tuesday 9:55-11:25 AM

GENETICS/EPIGENETICS: THE QUEST FOR UNDERSTANDING

Abbreviated Study Group Name: Genetics/Epigenetics

Coordinator: Norma Grossman

When DNA was identified, its code deciphered and its activities revealed, it was widely assumed that we had the whole story. But questions remained. Are genes themselves regulated without actually being changed? How are they switched on and off? Are controls pre-programmed? Are they influenced by external conditions? Can changes be inherited? Epigenetics is the science which explains the mechanisms and consequences of DNA control by other cell components. It is leading to a new understanding of every aspect of life and raises the still unanswered question: what controls epigenetics?

Reading: Carey, Nessa, *The Epigenetics Revolution* (Columbia University Press, 2013, ISBN 978-0231161176, \$18.95)

Since 1994, following a 26 year teaching career, **Norma Grossman** has coordinated many biology-based study groups and is grateful for the opportunity to share her enthusiasm.

Syllabus

Tuesday 9:55-11:25 AM

SPINNING ELECTIONS: HOW MOVIES, TV AND THE INTERNET HAVE PORTRAYED AND INFLUENCED THE ELECTORAL PROCESS

Abbreviated Study Group Name: Spinning Elections

Coordinators: Christine Godek, Rita Silverman

We view films, both fictional and documentary, as well as other media (TV commercials, debates, news reports) to see how American elections have been depicted over the past five decades, and how the electoral process has evolved. We examine the roles played by political consultants, campaign ads, debates, and the candidates' persona in influencing the outcomes of elections. By looking critically at the various communication tools employed, we consider changes in the election process and question whether and/or how the voting public has been manipulated. The films provide one way to look at the ever-changing landscape of the election process, while actual campaign advertisements, debates, and the internet offer other avenues for analysis.

Readings: Coursepack, \$15.

Films: *Wag the Dog*, *The Candidate*, *War Room*, *Primary Colors*, *Mitt*, *Media Malpractice*, *Can Mr. Smith Get to Washington Anymore?*

Other media: News reports, campaign advertisements, and debates, on YouTube.

Chris Godek is a marketing communications professional. She has created the public image for a number of political and business leaders and organizations. **Rita Silverman** is a retired professor of Educational Psychology. She is a film buff and a political junkie who enjoys making connections between these two interests.

Syllabus

Tuesday 12:10-1:40 PM

THE BOOK OF JOB, ANCIENT AND MODERN INTERPRETATIONS

Abbreviated Study Group Name: The Book of Job

Coordinators: Carl Binder, Mayer Perelmuter

The Book of Job has shaped Western thought and culture. Called "the greatest poem of ancient or modern times" (Tennyson) and "perhaps the greatest masterpiece of the human mind" (Victor Hugo), it raises fundamental questions concerning God's Justice, Character and Nature. Is suffering part of God's plan? If so, what is its role? How should we confront, endure and protest against it? We study the Biblical text and explore some of the modern interpretations. Participants are encouraged to share interpretations through reports and class discussion, including through the prism of their own experiences.

Readings and other Materials:

The Wisdom Books, translated by Robert Alter (W.W. Norton and Company, 2011, ISBN 978-0393340532; \$17.95);

Archibald MacLeish, *J.B.: A Play in Verse* (Houghton Mifflin, 1989, ISBN 0395083532; \$15);

Coursepack (price to be determined—no more than \$20).

The movie by the Coen Brothers, *A Serious Man*, and other videos.

Carl Binder, a retired attorney, served on the Nassau County Human Rights Commission, the American Association for the U.N., and the ACLU. He was Adjunct Professor at Baruch College. **Mayer Perelmutter** is Rabbi Emeritus of the Reform Temple of Forest Hills, and an Associate Adjunct Professor of Theology at St. John's University.

Syllabus

Tuesday 12:10-1:40 PM

UNDERSTANDING EUROPEAN SOCIALISM: A HISTORICAL RELIC OR A DREAM DEFERRED?

Abbreviated Study Group Name: Euro Socialism 1850-2000

Coordinator: Michael Hill

By 1850 socialism was an essential part of the economic and political landscape of Europe. Socialist theorists, socialist ideals, socialist political parties, socialist reforms, and socialist revolutions animated the continent's history. Even in 1980, the socialist parties in England and France still planned on nationalizing some major industries once in power. But today the socialist impulse seems to have run its course. This study group reads in the history of European socialism, covering major events like the Paris Commune, the Second International, twentieth century socialist political success, the challenge of communism and fascism, and the post WWII socialist vision for a united Europe. The group goal: to decide if European socialism is a dream deferred or one more item destined for Trotsky's dustbin of history.

Readings:

Albert S. Lindemann, *A History of European Socialism* (Yale University Press, 1984 ISBN 978-0300032468; \$39).

Selected documents via coursepack.

With a Ph.D. in European History, **Michael Hill** taught for 5 years in the US and Europe. He then worked for a marketing company until recently.

Syllabus **Tuesday 12:10-1:40 PM**

INDIVIDUAL CIVIL LIBERTIES UNDER THE CONSTITUTION

Abbreviated Study Group Name: Individual Civil Liberties

Coordinators: Jonathan Gaines and Joseph Zuckerman

The U.S. Constitution guarantees that no one may be deprived of life, liberty, or property, without due process of law, nor be denied the equal protection of the laws, nor be subject to unreasonable searches. The study group explores how the Supreme Court has narrowed or widened these guarantees of freedom from governmental interference in a wide range of circumstances, including race, religion, gender, privacy, personal autonomy, economic regulation, and government surveillance. We base discussion on readings from the majority and dissenting opinions in key Supreme Court decisions; we have condensed the opinions for inclusion in a coursepack and edited out procedural discussions that do not directly affect public policy concerns.

Readings: Coursepack (less than \$20) includes condensed texts of the Supreme Court's opinions that will be covered in each session.

Jonathan Gaines and **Joe Zuckerman** are both lawyers; Joe has coordinated several study groups on various subjects.

Syllabus

Tuesday 12:10-1:40 PM

AMERICAN LIFE AS VIEWED THROUGH THE IMMIGRANT'S LENS

Abbreviated Study Group Name: Immigrant Lens on America

Coordinator: Arlette Sanders

Foreign nationals continue to flock to "the promised land" in the 20th and 21st centuries. Some are impoverished immigrants who risk their lives to achieve survival. Others come with some resources in order to escape political repression. Yet others, proud with education and talent, come to fulfill professional goals. In all cases, the collision with the United States is a revelation, both exhilarating and startlingly disappointing! We read six novels by award-winning 21st century authors. Each focuses on foreigners' reactions to American culture and values. What did they gain in America? What did they lose? What do they envision in its future? The study group discusses these themes as well as each book's unique literary merits.

Assignment for the First Session: Please read Chapters 1-6 (to page 92) in *The Reluctant Fundamentalist*.

Readings: Hamid, Mohsin, *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* (Harvest Books, 2008, ISBN 0156034026; \$14);

Otsuka, Julie, *The Buddha in the Attic* (Anchor Books, 2012, ISBN 9780307744425; \$13.95);

Aciman, Andre, *Harvard Square* (Norton Reprint Edition, 2014, ISBN 0393348288; \$15.95);

Messud, Claire, *The Woman Upstairs* (Vintage Contemporaries, 2014, ISBN 0307743764; \$15);

Shteyngart, Gary, *Super Sad True Love Story* (Random House, 2011, ISBN 0812977866; \$16);

Toibin, Colm, *Brooklyn* (Scribner, 2010, ISBN 1439148953; \$15).

Arlette Sanders taught Comparative Literature and facilitates seven monthly book groups. She has coordinated study groups about the contemporary novel, the Old Testament and *Plague as Literature*.

Syllabus

Wednesday 9:55-11:25 AM

ANTON CHEKHOV: SHORT STORIES AND PLAYS

Abbreviated Study Group Name: Anton Chekhov

Coordinators: Stephen Kalinsky, Carter Swoope

Chekhov has been called the father of the modern short story and progenitor of the Theatre of the Absurd – a writer who, like other great Russian writers, is able to offer profound insight into our condition as human beings. Chekhov, unlike many Russian writers, also makes us laugh. Chekhov clearly loved life and put that warmth and affection into his writings. We look at three of his major plays, two one-act plays and many of his short stories. As we reach for an in-depth

encounter with the man who was a founding father of modern drama as well as the modern short story, we come to understand how Chekhov's works employ literary techniques and a viewpoint quite new to the literature of the day.

Readings:

Anton Chekhov, *Chekhov: The Essential Plays*, translated by Michael Henry Heim (Modern Library, 2003, ISBN 9780375761348; \$10);

Anton Chekhov, *Selected Stories of Anton Chekhov*, translated by Richard Pevear and Larissa Volokhonsky (Modern Library, 2000, ISBN 9780553381009; \$15).

Other materials will be emailed by the coordinators.

Steve Kalinsky, an attorney, coordinated 9 study groups. He has seen many productions of Chekhov's plays and (through a New School course) has recently been introduced to Chekhov's short stories. **Carter Swoope** has led study groups on early modernist culture in Germany and Vienna. He is excited about surveying Chekhov and the Russian literary landscape.

Syllabus

Wednesday 9:55-11:25 AM

STORIES IN OUR LIVES

Abbreviated Study Group Name: Stories in Our Lives

Coordinators: Jan Adler, Dan Marcus, Howie Menikoff

We take for granted how we use stories, and the subtle ways we respond to them. By reading about stories, and using some as illustrations, we discuss the following questions: What capacities of our brain are involved in storytelling? How do our stories define us as individuals, and as group members with shared stories? What are the elements of a good story: How do the nuts and bolts of writing contribute? Are there plots that are found in almost all cultures? What impact does storytelling have on medicine, law, and science? What kinds of stories are timeless i.e. myths, fairy tales, folk tales? We read Joseph Campbell, Maria Tatar, Christopher Boyd, Jack Zipes, Charles Tilly, and some stories that illustrate their ideas.

Readings: Coursepack. Estimated cost \$25.

Jan Adler has coordinated a wide range of study groups at the IRP. This is **Dan Marcus's** maiden voyage as a coordinator. He is a retired physician and has been telling stories or listening to them all his life. **Howie Menikoff** has been accused of telling stories his entire life. He has coordinated two courses on fairy tales.

Syllabus

Wednesday 9:55-11:25 AM

FRENCH NEW WAVE FILMS AND BEYOND

Abbreviated Study Group Name: French New Wave Films

Coordinators: Anne-Marie Bourbon, Robert Gerace

We sample films from French New Wave directors from 1959 through the early 1970's. Films include: *Elevator to the Gallows*, *The 400 Blows*, *Hiroshima Mon Amour*, *Pickpocket*, *Cleo From 5 to 7*, *Breathless*, *Contempt*, *Jules et Jim*, *Z*, *My Night at Maud's*, *Discreet Charm of the Bourgeoisie*, *The Butcher*. The term "French New Wave" refers to a group of films produced in France after World War II that tried to counter the stale formulas of literary narratives, costume dramas and historical epics that

were typical of prewar directors. The new directors looked for a fresh approach to modernism using ambiguous endings, flawed antiheroes, changed roles for women, and a conscious effort to defeat any sense of audience expectations.

Readings: Coursepack includes background and introduction to the French New Wave, as well as film reviews and director biographies.

Anne-Marie Bourbon has enjoyed all these films and wants to deepen her appreciation by sharing them and analyzing them with others. **Robert Gerace** has coordinated courses on Greenwich Village Writers and Italian Cinema.

Syllabus

Wednesday 9:55-11:25 AM

NIXON: THE MAN AND HIS TIMES

Abbreviated Study Group Name: Nixon

Coordinators: Michael Marsh, Sara Otey

Richard Nixon is perhaps the most complicated and enigmatic of presidents. A man of great talents and accomplishments, he was responsible for illegal actions, despised by many, admired by others and forced to resign from office. Nixon was a product of the historical and political environment of his era. We study the man and those times. We read biography and investigate how Nixon was perceived by California conservatives, fifties liberals, New Left radicals, the press corps, his loyalists, his psychobiographers, the Foreign Policy Establishment, and historians.

Readings and other Required Materials:

Greenberg, David, *Nixon's Shadow: The History of an Image* (WW Norton and Company, 2004, ISBN 978-039332616-1). Out of print; many used copies available.

Black, Conrad, *Richard M. Nixon: A Life in Full* (Public Affairs Publisher, New York, 2007, ISBN 978-1586485191). Out of print; available used for under \$40..

Michael Marsh, a former docent at the New York Historical Society, has coordinated multiple study groups on American and British history.

Sara Otey, a journalist, has coordinated many study groups. The most recent was about Winston Churchill.

Syllabus

Wednesday 12:10-1:40 PM

EMERGING INFECTIOUS DISEASES

Abbreviated Study Group Name: Emerging Diseases

Coordinator: Hannah Shear

Some of the most deadly human infectious diseases in modern times have been detected throughout the world over the last 50 years. Some such as AIDS were around for years before the public became aware of them. Are humans contributing to the spread of these infections? Are we facing another pandemic such as AIDS? What can we do to stem this trend? We look at the biology of these viral, bacterial, and protozoan infectious agents, when and where they emerged and why they emerged at this juncture in time.

Reading: David Quammen, *Spillover: Animal Infections and the Next Human Pandemic*(WW Norton and Company, 2013, ISBN 0393346617; \$16.95).

Hannah L. Shear researched and taught courses on parasitic diseases and studied immune responses to malaria, trypanosomiasis, and *Pneumocystis carinii* at NYU Medical Center and Albert Einstein College of Medicine.

Syllabus

Wednesday 12:10-1:40 PM

READING TRANSGRESSIVE MEMOIRS

Abbreviated Study Group Name: Transgressive Memoirs

Coordinator: Erich Goode

“I kill people,” says Joey in his autobiography, *Killer*. “It’s the thing I do best. I shoot people and that’s it.” The author, a hit-man, accompanies narrations of his horrific crimes with verbal devices to make readers feel better about them. Memoirs, especially those that narrate the author’s wrongdoing, tend to be self-serving. Such narrations enable the actor/author to align a positive self-image with revelations that, initially, seem to contradict such a self-conception. We look at how memoirs narrate putatively “deviant” behavior—mainly crime, substance abuse, sexual transgressions, and political radicalism—through the use of self-exculpating, stigma-neutralizing devices, yet also manage to tell an interesting, engaging story. We all use these devices to some degree; through this targeted study our ears are sharpened to detect them.

Readings and other requirements: Coursepack, with memoir excerpts, as well as critical and academic articles. (See syllabus for full listing.) In addition, participants read a complete memoir and make a presentation about it to the study group.

Erich Goode is Sociology Professor Emeritus at Stony Brook University. He has taught at a half-dozen universities and published 11 books, including *Justifiable Conduct* (2013).

Syllabus

Wednesday 12:10-1:40 PM

DIVORCE IN FICTION AND FILM

Abbreviated Study Group Name: Divorce

Coordinators: Sophie Balcoff, Michelle Harris

“Happy families are all alike; each unhappy family is unhappy in its own way,” is how Tolstoy famously began *Anna Karenina*. We explore what happens when family unhappiness reaches the breaking point. Short stories by authors such as Munro, Lahiri and Updike show us the many ways that things can go wrong in marriage; the ramifications of a divorce upon the children, upon friends, and, of course, upon the couple itself. We also see how Hollywood has depicted divorce by watching movies such as *Kramer vs. Kramer* and *Husbands and Wives*. Finally, we read essays that explore the topic.

Readings and other materials:

Caitlin Shetterly, *Fault Lines: Stories of Divorce* (Berkley Hardcover, 2001, ISBN 0425181618). Out of print, copies available.

Coursepack.

Several films, including *Kramer vs. Kramer*, *What Maisie Knew*, *His Girl Friday*, *Husbands and Wives*.

Sophie Balcoff was a high school history teacher. She has coordinated three study groups since she joined the IRP in 2012. **Michelle Harris** worked as in labor relations at CUNY. Michelle and Sophie recently co-coordinated The Parent-Child Connection in Short Fiction.”

Syllabus

Wednesday 12:10-1:40 PM

NEW YORK REVIEW OF BOOKS SEMINAR

Abbreviated Study Group Name: New York Review

Coordinator: Jane Case Einbender

Each week a different member of the seminar takes full responsibility for leading an in-depth discussion of that week’s assigned essay from *The New York Review of Books*. Provision of supplementary information based upon prior study and/or research stimulated by the assignment is encouraged. The essays selected reflect the range of subject matter in this scholarly periodical, which covers politics, history, science, philosophy and the arts as well as literature. Every participant must be willing to lead one class-length discussion.

Readings: *The New York Review of Books*, August, September, October and November issues – print (non-electronic) editions (\$7.95 per issue for non-subscribers). Note that it may take two months for a new subscriber to receive the first issue. Supplementary readings will be emailed each week.

Jane Case Einbender is an avid explorer of contemporary experience, as interested in cultural politics as in international politics. She has coordinated this seminar in previous semesters

Syllabus

Thursday 9:55-11:25 AM

MIDDLEMARCH: ICONIC NOVEL/PERSONAL RESPONSE

Abbreviated Study Group Name: Middlemarch

Coordinators: Harding (Pete) Lemay, Gloria Plesent

George Eliot’s 19th century *Middlemarch* has become an iconic novel for writers and readers of the 21st century. Her masterful command of social, political, religious issues of her day and her compelling insightful portraits of four marriages evoke the truths and falsity of life in a provincial English village. Our second book, *My Life in Middlemarch* by Rebecca Mead, is an appealing and often moving account of the author’s deeply personal response to *Middlemarch*. Having read the novel many times, particularly during difficult periods of her life, Mead believes that the book exerted a profound influence on her understanding of her own life and moved her towards an acceptance of her failures, and joy in her successes.

Readings:

George Eliot, *Middlemarch* (any edition);

Rebecca Mead, *My Life in Middlemarch* (Crown, 2014, ISBN 978-0307984760; \$25).

Harding (Pete) Lemay is the author of 12 produced plays, two memoirs and many television scripts. He has taught literature and writing. **Gloria Plesent** believes that literature helps us keep the long view and reminds us what’s really important in life. She holds a Masters in Comparative Literature.

Syllabus

Thursday 9:55-11:25 AM

ISLAND OF SAINTS AND SINNERS, PART 2: POLITICS, IDENTITY AND GENDER IN CONTEMPORARY IRISH DRAMA

Abbreviated Study Group Name: Contemporary Irish Drama

Coordinators: Barbara Kobrin, Esther Phillips

From three generations of playwrights we discuss five dramas taking place during the Irish Republic's economic rise and Northern Ireland's period of the "troubles." A sixth by Conor McPherson is set in today's Dublin. We start with Brian Friel's experimental and influential *Faith Healer*, followed by Tom Murphy's *Bailengangaire*, a masterpiece of estrangement and reconciliation between mother and daughters in isolated rural Ireland. In a similar setting Martin McDonagh creates an unforgettable, mutually destructive portrait of mother and daughter in *Beauty Queen of Leenane*. They are Ireland's unseen women, bypassed and stranded by modernization. Playwrights Stewart Parker (Protestant) and Anne Devlin (Catholic) depict lives in Belfast, the principal Loyalist/Unionist stronghold, where a power-sharing agreement between Unions and Nationalists was sabotaged in 1974 by Unionists.

Readings:

Anne Devlin, *Ourselves Alone* (Dramatist's Play Service, 1999, ISBN 0822216728; \$8);

Tom Murphy, *Bailengangaire* in *The Methuen Drama Anthology of Irish Plays*, edited by Patrick Lonergan (Bloomsbury Publishing, 2008, ISBN 1408167875; \$19.95);

***Note this book was used in Part I of Irish Drama.

Martin McDonagh, *The Beauty Queen of Leenane and other plays* (Vintage 1998, ISBN 03775704876; out of print, used copies available).

Other readings, including the first assignment (Friel's *Faith Healer*) will be sent as email attachments.

Barbara has coordinated study groups in both psychology and theater. She finds fascinating the deep interaction in Irish writers between political striving and intrinsic "Irishness." **Esther**, a retired Mathematics professor, has coordinated groups on Stoppard's plays; Russian literature, history and politics; the Soviet Union; South Africa; the post-colonial world; even, Utopia.

Syllabus

Thursday 9:55-11:25 AM

GREAT CONVERSATIONS FROM GREAT BOOKS

Abbreviated Study Group Name: Great Conversations/Books

Coordinators: Arlyne LeSchack, Judith Zaborowski

Each week, the study group enters into a dialogue with a great writer by closely studying a text and discussing the issues that it raises. The themes that run through the selections include ways of living, living in community, forms of belief, the power of knowledge, and the perspective of history. The writers are the unknown author of *The Epic of Gilgamesh*, Montaigne, Pascal, Emerson, Whitman, Tocqueville, Ibsen, Henri Poincare, Freud, Conrad, Thorstein Veblen, Jung, Tillie Olsen and Alice Munro. We use the Shared Inquiry approach pioneered by the Great Books Foundation. In this method, the group leaders guide participants in

reaching their own interpretations by posing thought-provoking questions and by encouraging full consideration of everyone's ideas.

Assignment for First Session: Please read *The Epic of Gilgamesh*.

Text: *Great Conversations 1*, Daniel Born and Donald Whitfield, editors (Great Books Foundation, 2004, ISBN 978-0945159346; \$24.95) available from <http://store.greatbooks.org/adu-gc1.html>

Arlyne, after 25 years as an educator for the NYC Department of Education, has coordinated four study groups on literature and one Great Conversations group. **Judy** coordinated a Great Conversations study group with Arlyne last fall. She finds that her brain is nourished by our study group and its conversations.

[Syllabus](#)

Thursday 9:55-11:25 AM

WORDS OF WISDOM: THEIRS, MINE, OURS

Abbreviated Study Group Name: Wisdom: Theirs, Mine, Ours

Coordinator: Howard Seeman

What is wisdom literature? Timeless thoughts and feelings that have been deemed "valid" for generations though from different cultures and eras. In this study group, we discover and distill our own wisdom by considering short concentrated poetic statements/adages/ admonitions/aphorisms about "life issues" given to us by writers from Socrates to Shakespeare to Margaret Fuller to Emily Dickinson...to today's poets/philosophers. We examine major life issues—aging, raising children, mortality, "the good life"—first by open group discussion, then by close study of the words of great writers; and finally, at home, by writing our own short statements/aphorisms/ poems of wise counsel, to be shared at the next group session. At term's end, the group compiles its own "gifts" to the next generations.

Readings: Coursepack.

Howard Seeman has a Ph.D. in Philosophy and Social Psychology. He is Prof. Emeritus at CUNY, a certified life coach, a published poet, and a consultant in the teaching of education.

[Syllabus](#)

Thursday 12:10-1:40 PM

BEETHOVEN'S SYMPHONIES: LISTENING WITH NEW EARS

Abbreviated Study Group Name: Beethoven's Symphonies

Coordinator: James Smith

Is it possible to hear these works with new ears? And spirits? Great art is said to have different meaning in different eras, and at different stages of our lives. We engage strenuously with these revolutionary pieces to see whether we can make new sense of them, both in terms of how they have defined and changed the art form over time, and what they might be able to illuminate about the human condition (and what people have believed them to do in this regard). Prerequisite: fresh ears and a fresh mind.

Readings and other Required Materials: Materials for the course will be available on the internet, both readings and listening assignments through YouTube.

James Smith has long been a lover of many types of music, from bluegrass to Balinese. He coordinated a Beethoven Quartets group three years ago.

Syllabus

Thursday 12:10-1:40 PM

AMERICANS AND THE ENVIRONMENT: A HISTORY OF CHALLENGES AND CHOICES

Abbreviated Study Group Name: Americans and Environment

Coordinators: Celeste Cheyney, Norma Grossman and Mary Houts

Since the first European settlers arrived in the New World, America has been faced with environmental challenges – from taming the wilderness to reducing pollution – and we've made choices about how to treat the environment. Many Americans have simply wanted to exploit our natural resources. Others have encouraged us to appreciate nature for its inherent value and have developed strategies to enhance and protect it. We follow American attitudes concerning the environment from colonial times to the present using selections from a variety of sources. As we proceed we examine the relationship between our current beliefs and those of earlier eras. We conclude with a focus on current environmental challenges and the choices we have for dealing with them.

Readings: A coursepack with the assigned readings from a variety of secondary and primary sources will be available for purchase for approximately \$30. 20-40 pages of reading per session.

Celeste Cheyney has coordinated a study group about Frederick Law Olmsted's life and work, and welcomes the opportunity to examine the role of nature in a broader context. **Norma Grossman** taught biology for 26 years and has coordinated science courses since 1994. She is excited to be collaborating in this timely, innovative venture. **Mary Houts** has an MS in Conservation of Natural Resources. She was Associate Director and Curator of Education at the Hershey Museum in Hershey, PA for 21 years.

Syllabus

Thursday 12:10-1:40 PM

THE ART OF WRITING

Abbreviated Study Group Name: Art of Writing

Coordinators: Eileen Brener, Lorna Porter, Charles Troob, Elaine Weisburg

This lively workshop encourages participants with varying writing goals (fiction, essay, and memoir) to enrich their work by studying excerpts from distinguished authors. We examine classic, modern, and contemporary writers to sharpen our awareness of the elements of style: language, voice, organization, and characterization. Authors used in the past term include Hilary Mantel, Annie Proulx, Grace Paley, James Salter, Raymond Carver, and J.D. Salinger. Each week, everyone writes a short piece based on an assignment from one of the coordinators. Longer pieces are presented toward the end of the term. As writers we each enjoy an audience of ten to fifteen other writers who read our work carefully and give us helpful comments.

Materials: Writing assignments and excerpts from authors are emailed to participants weekly. Participants must have computers and are required to email submissions both as attachments and as text pasted into the body of the email.

Eileen Brener, after teaching expository and legal writing for years, is delighted to break out into creative writing at the IRP. **Lorna Scott Porter**, indebted to IRP

writing groups for fine insights into both good writing and good reading, will be co-coordinating Art of Writing for the 11th time. **Charles Troob** has participated in The Art of Writing since 2010. He coordinated two study groups on recent fiction. **Elaine Weisburg** worked at Conde Nast and Hearst for nearly four decades where she learned how much she loves to refine writing, whether her own or that of others.

Syllabus

Thursday 12:10-1:40 PM

FINNEGANS WAKE

Abbreviated Study Group Name: Finnegans Wake

Coordinators: Ted Gannon, Harry Levy

This continuing study group introduces the reader to the “chaosmos” (*FW* 118.21) of Joyce’s last work and explores its themes, characters, and language. An emphasis is placed on the explication of selected passages, words, puns, literary and historical references, and themes and characters. Guest lecturers and written commentary are used in an effort to make it all clear.

Readings: Joyce, James, *Finnegans Wake* (Penguin, 1999, ISBN 0141181265; \$22).

Ted Gannon has been an IRP member for over a decade and coordinated several literature groups, including James Joyce. **Harry Levy**, retired entrepreneur and a well read bibliophile recently coordinated Ulysses over a two year period.

Syllabus

Friday 11 AM-12:30 PM

EXPLORING CREATIVITY

Abbreviated Study Group Name: Exploring Creativity

Coordinators: Marshall Marcovitz, Claude Samton

What is creativity? Is it a magic moment whereby something new and valuable is created—an idea, a painting, a photograph, a joke, a literary work, new technology, an invention, music, business, etc.? Can creativity be taught? Are there recognized techniques to become more creative? Why are some periods in history more creative than others? We explore the creative process and compare the profiles of some of our most well known creative geniuses—Leonardo Da Vinci, Shakespeare, Mozart, Picasso, Steve Jobs—and other exceptionally creative people in history. We use different media: films, videos, the Internet, and Stephen Nachmanovitch’s Book *Free Play: Improvisation in Life and Art*. Our sessions feature improvisational theater techniques, daydreaming productivity, reports, reading, and visual presentations.

Reading: Stephen Nachmanovitch, *Free Play: Improvisation in Life and Art* (G. P. Putnam’s Sons, 1991, ISBN 087477317; \$14.95).

Marshall Marcovitz, an entrepreneur, teacher, journalist, and exhibited photographer, is fascinated by big ideas, imagination and creativity. He has taught at the University of Illinois, Northwestern, and University of Chicago. **Claude Samton**, an architect, exhibited artist and photographer, is Director of SoHoLoCo, an improvisational theatre company. He has taught at Columbia, NYU, Cooper Union, and San Francisco State.

Syllabus

Friday 11 AM-12:30 PM

UNPACKING THE MAGIC OF GREAT WRITERS: HOW NARRATIVE HOLDS US.

Abbreviated Study Group Name: The Magic of Narrative

Coordinators: Cameron McDonald, Steve Reichstein

Exactly why does a narrative grab us, compel us, and stay with us decades after we've turned its last page? In this study group for writers and interested readers, we engage in probing discussions of works from the 19th to 21st centuries. We read Conrad, Woolf, Kafka, Nabokov, among others, and we view film stories of Graham Greene and journalist-author Mark Boal. We try to determine what makes each unique opus work. We also consider matters such as: form, style, structure and plot; the interplay of prose, poetry, and music; novel openings; layered meanings; and what Orhan Pamuk calls the "center" of a novel. Guest presenters deepen our learning experience.

Readings and other materials:

Coursepack of readings—see syllabus for details. Viewing of two films (*The Hurt Locker* and *The Third Man*) in preparation for the first (Overview) session.

As an editor, **Cameron McDonald** collaborated with authors and scholars in preparing authoritative editions of American writings. She feels fortunate to continue collaborative studies at the IRP. While completing his third book, **Steve Reichstein** realized he didn't really know how exceptional writers weave their magic, but he was determined to find out.

Syllabus

Friday 11 AM-12:30 PM

RELIGION IN CONTEMPORARY AMERICAN LIFE

Abbreviated Study Group Name: Contemporary US Religion

Coordinator: Jay Fleishman

No one lens can capture the richness and diversity of American religious life. We use the theories, concepts, and methods of the social sciences, especially sociology, to examine religion in contemporary American life from several viewpoints: secularization/modernity versus traditionalism, the church/sect continuum, inter-congregational variety, ritual and taboos, spirituality without religion, cults and new religions, minority religions, the nature of religious experience, and religious/political polarization. We explore religious groups ranging from Jews and Mormons to Scientologists and Seventh Day Adventists. Along the way, we look at brief, evocative descriptions of seven different congregations. Study group members give reports on pre-selected topics.

Readings:

Robert Putnam and David E. Campbell, *American Grace: How Religion Divides and Unites Us* (Simon & Schuster, 2010, ISBN 978-1416566731; \$19.99);

Coursepack (estimated cost \$20 to \$30).

Jay Fleishman wrote his Master's thesis in sociology on Jews in his home state of North Carolina. Growing up in the Bible Belt, he has always been fascinated by religion.

Syllabus

Friday 11 AM-12:30 PM

PHOTOGRAPHY: HISTORY, IMAGES AND AESTHETICS

Abbreviated Study Group Name: Photography History

Coordinator: Lew Schwartz

In 1825, Nicéphore Niépce produced a pewter plate with the world's first photograph on its surface. This development, akin to the invention of writing, spread, contagiously, to every society on earth. The furthest corners of the universe, the most acute observations and visual comment now find themselves in the hands of the casual reader. Photography evolves by contradiction, challenge and redefinition; it forever alters our notions of art. What is it? How and why does it work? This survey of current and historical issues examines, through photographs, readings and discussion, the phenomenon of photography from its inception to images currently hanging on the walls of NYC's wonderful museums and galleries. Group members may complete optional photo assignments and may give reports on masters of photography.

Assignment for First Session: Please read three essays by Clement Greenberg: "Modernist Painting," "Four Photographers," and "The Camera's Glass Eye". Links or electronic editions will be sent to participants.

Readings and other Required Materials:

Goldberg, Vicki, *Photography in Print: Writings from 1816 to the Present* (Touchstone /Simon and Schuster, 1981, ISBN 0671250353) Any edition is ok;

Trachtenberg, Alan, *Classic Essays on Photography* (Leete's Island Books 1980, ISBN 091817208X; \$18.95).

Recommended but not required: Edwards, Steve, *Photography: A Very Short Introduction*, (Oxford University Press, 2006, ISBN 9780192801647, \$11.95)

Additional recommended readings are in the syllabus.

A volunteer at the founding of the ICP, **Lew Schwarz's** recent writings have appeared on photography blogs and his photographs hang in galleries in New York and Brooklyn.

Syllabus